



The Weekly Page

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Pages Learn About Legislature



Big ideas in government

Throughout the week pages grappled with understanding the three “big ideas” for a representative government: **governing society is a complex process, successful democracies rely on responsible citizens, and government affects our life every day.** As they participated in daily discussions, listened to guest speakers, and proposed bills in mock committee hearings, their understanding around the concepts deepened. On Friday, they wrote about one of the big ideas to demonstrate the depth of their new knowledge.

Pages write bills

Pages worked individually or in small groups to write bills designed to address issues which were relevant to them and the state. They had their choice of working up a social bill or a fiscal bill to present in a mock committee hearing on Thursday with their partners. Hard decisions had to be made about cutting services and/or raising taxes in the budget committees. Topics for social bills included banning smoking in cars with minors, adoption, childhood obesity, and plastic bag bans.

How will plastic bag ban work?

Olympia – House Bill 2194 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Madison Morris and Deseree Zamora. “This bill addresses the issue of ocean pollution and will clean up the oceans and save marine life,” said Rep. Morris. With Americans using between 30 and 100 plastic bags a year, which can encircle the earth at least 31 times, thousands of sea turtles and other animals are killed each year. Many of these bags are being found in Antarctica, according to Rep. Zamora. “It takes 1,000 years for them to decompose,” she says. China, which uses more than three billion bags a day, has recently outlawed them. “Over 12 million barrels of oil are used to make plastic bags, and only a tiny fraction make it into the recycle bin,” said Rep. Morris.



Puget Sound gets a helping hand

Olympia—Yesterday, Representative Tony Hacker introduced House Bill 2507, which addresses the issue of water pollution. “The bill is a good one because it will improve and repair the ecosystem,” said Rep. Hacker. If this bill becomes law, the legislature will enforce stricter sewer regulations, provide research data on the Puget Sound ecosystem, and add a new tax to ocean fishing licenses.



Reps advocate for French healthcare system

Olympia – Yesterday, Representatives Erica Rasmussen, Bekah Hinkle, Cassandra Ward introduced House Bill 1500, which addresses the issue of health care. “The bill is a good one because it will ensure that every Washington state resident is covered with good health care,” said Rep. Rasmussen. One in every seven Washington State residents does not have health insurance, according to Rep. Hinkle. “Americans pay approximately \$7,000 per year just to be covered for health care, while French residents pay \$3500 every year and their health care is better. Sixty-six percent of the French are very satisfied with their coverage while the seventy-eight percent of Americans are very unsatisfied.

Bill offers healthier choices for school lunches

Olympia – House Bill 1234 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Mary Jarvis and Irina Lyons. “This bill addresses the issue of childhood obesity and promote healthy eating habits in young people,” said Rep. Jarvis. Many youth and teens are



obese. If this bill becomes law, all public schools will be required to offer healthy and natural foods in school lunches. Many children and teens may not have the right types of food in their homes, but at school

they will get a variety of healthy choices and learn good eating practices for their future, according to Rep. Lyons.

Gray inmates to be freed early

Olympia – House Bill 2555 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Jackson Reed and Grady Pomeroy. “This bill addresses the issue of the cost of housing elderly prisoners and will save taxpayers money,” said Rep. Reed. This bill proposes freeing ailing, elderly prisoners who do not pose a danger to society. It will keep the public protected, protect the rights of prisoners, and save taxpayers money, according to Rep. Pomeroy.

Legislature takes away one more light-up haven for smokers

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Leah Phipps and Nicole Decker introduced Senate Bill 5166, which addresses the issue of smoking in vehicles containing minors. “The bill is a good one because it will lower the rate of deaths due to second hand smoke. Also, since there are few places left to smoke, it could nudge people to stop smoking,” said Sen. Phipps. “People need



to know that they are poisoning children when they smoke in these confining places. That's not ok,” said Sen. Decker. Tests have shown that in the cars of smokers, hazard levels are up to 10 times the danger

levels set up by the Environmental Protection Agency. The bill prevents smoking cigarettes, pipes, and cigars in any enclosed vehicle, when a minor is present. “A parent or adult won't listen to a 5-year-old telling them to stop smoking. However, if they light up in a car with a friend, they will be more likely to listen if the other adult asks them to stop,” continued Decker. The law will be a secondary offence, won't be reported to insurance companies, and won't go into effect until a year after it has passed, so that people can get educated about the bill. Other states have already made similar laws.

Gay marriage justified

Olympia – Senate Bill 5001 was introduced yesterday by Senator Molly Fallen. “This bill addresses the issue of individual rights of citizens and will legalize gay marriage,” said Sen. Fallen. It will extend the rights of gays and lesbians, but will not infringing upon the rights of others. “This is what gay rights activists have been fighting for for years. Couples who love each other, no matter what their orientation, should not be denied the right to marry,” said Sen. Fallen.



Sanctuary cities bill may halt crime wave

Olympia – Yesterday, Senator Ruth Ptak introduced Senate Bill 5982, which addresses the issue of sanctuary cities. “The bill is a good one because it protects the safety of our citizens by reducing crime, and it also ensures cooperation with federal law,” said Sen. Ptak. Sanctuary cities are problematic because they have high crime rates. According to a California *City Journal* article, up to 2/3 of all fugitive felony warrants (17,000) are for illegal aliens. Sanctuary cities refuse to cooperate with federal officials in apprehending these criminals, according to Sen. Ptak. The bill requires all sanctuary cities to repeal their sanctuary policy within 18 months or be subjected to a fine of \$5,000 per week.



Serious fiscal crisis may result in new taxes

Olympia—Yesterday, the House Ways and Means Committee heard testimony from Representatives Riley Ochs, Michael Blumlein, Tyler Haas, Nate Robison, Mario Baron, John Paul Baron, and

McKenzie Horner regarding the projected revenue short-fall for the



2009-2011 biennium and the suggested remedies to balance the state operating budget. “We want to cause as little suffering as possible, but we are in a terrible economic crisis, the worst

we’ve seen in decades,” said Rep. Blumlein. Among the list of cuts offered were tourism marketing which would save \$6.6 million. “I don’t like what we have had to propose,” said Rep. Ochs, “but we simply have to bite the bullet.”



Although many legislators had made campaign promises to forgo raising taxes, the committee saw a need to make

up for lost revenues by adding a 50 cent tax on cigarettes and a 5 cent tax on 12-oz. soft drinks. In addition, the lawmakers suggested taxing hard liquor by \$1 per liter bottle and placing a 10 percent tax on card rooms. Rep. Mario Baron rationalized, “If

someone wins big in the card rooms, giving 10 percent to the state will not hurt them much and we could see \$58 million more in our general fund.”

“I know times are bad, but we should come out of this situation in good shape if we make some sacrifices now,” said Rep. Robison.

Lawmakers fight against harmful plastic bags

Olympia – House Bill 3713 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Marissa Martinez and Bridgette Johnson. “This bill addresses the issue of plastic bags in retail stores and will encourage households to use reusable cloth bags in order to prevent further depletion of the environment and natural resources,” said Rep. Johnson. The main idea of the bill is to place a 20 cent fee on all “carryout” plastic bags in retail and grocery stores. This bill excludes all bags that are used for prepackaged foods, fresh meat products, fruit and vegetable bags, nuts, candy, and other bulk packaged items, dairy products, ice, and precooked foods. The city of Seattle has already placed such a tax on their bags, and many lawmakers and citizens are extremely happy with the new eco-friendly tax. “We believe that once people are aware of the harm these bags do to their environment, they will switch to eco-friendly, reusable or compostable plastic bags,” said Rep. Martinez.



Can talking kill?

Olympia – House Bill 1001 was introduced yesterday by Representatives Nate Duval-Igarta, Kelsea Payne and Chloe Robocker. “This bill addresses the issue of cell phones being used while driving and will make the roads safer from inattentive drivers,” said Rep. Duval-Igarta. If this bill becomes law, it will change the offence from a secondary to a primary one. “No one is paying any attention to the law now,” said Rep. Robocker. “We still have collisions and bad driving as a result of talking on hand-held cellular devices. Until this law has some teeth, nothing will change.”



Adoption option

Olympia – Yesterday, Senators Elizabeth Thomas and Hope Warner introduced Senate Bill 5298, which addresses the issue of adoption. “The bill is a good one because it promotes a positive option for unwanted pregnancies,” said Sen. Thomas. This bill will launch a public ad campaign highlighting adoption success stories and the positive statistics surrounding the practice. It will also require a more complete education in public schools in regard to adoption. “We will fund the public billboard and radio advertising spots through the general fund,” said Sen. Warner.



While adults smoke, kids choke

Olympia – Senate Bill 5432 was introduced yesterday by Senators Kaitlyn Dimak, Abigail Brooks, and Cortnie Smith. “This bill addresses the issue of second-hand smoking in cars and will keep kids safe from the smoke produced by adult drivers,” said Sen. Brooks. The bill would ban smoking in cars with children under the age of 16 as passengers. Second-hand smoke is associated with lung disease, heart disease, asthma, and ear infections in children and adults. In extreme cases infant deaths were caused by second-hand smoke. “The bill sets out to protect children from the harmful effects of second-hand smoke in vehicle,” said Sen. Dimak.



Senate tries to balance budget

Olympia—Yesterday Senators Spencer Wilson, Austin Travers, Blake Wargo, Gavin Kovacs, and Alex Trautman met with the Senate Ways and Means Committee to pound out hard solutions to a serious budget shortfall predicted for the next biennium. “There just doesn’t seem to be any way around raising some taxes,” said Sen. Wilson. Among the suggested products slated for a tax increase were liquor, up \$1 per liter; cigarettes, up 50 cents a pack; and soda pop, up 5 cents a can. Other proposals included bumping up the sales tax temporarily by .5 percent.

“This could bring in \$999 million in revenue,” said Sen. Travers. Other senators suggested cutting back on goods and services. “If we just reuse paper clips and recycle our paper, we can cut \$200 million in waste out of our state budget,” said Sen. Trautman. Legalizing gambling by allowing slot machines in grocery stores and bowling alleys and adding a “Quick-draw Keno” lottery game could add another \$116 million, according to Sen. Kovacs. “Unfortunately, there is no easy fix for this situation,” said Sen. Wargo. Everyone is going to have to tighten his belt and make sacrifices.”



Guest speakers visit Page School

David Johnson of TVW, Health Department Secretary Mary Selecky, Greg Lane of TVW, and Allen Hayward, senior House counsel joined the pages during classes on Wednesday. The speakers talked about what led them to their current positions and shared insightful information about their jobs. As the Edu-

cation and Media Specialist for TVW, Johnson explained that Washington State is unique with its private not-for-profit TV station, which covers politic news at the capitol from “gavel to gavel.” Lane, CEO of TVW, helped

students navigate the TVW web site and pointed out several features that educators could use in their classrooms. Secretary Selecky and her communication specialist, Tim Church, talked about the “No Stank You” stop-smoking campaign and showed popular commercials they had developed. “Whatever job you choose in life,” advised Senior House Counsel Allen Hayward, “make it something that is both fun and challenging.” He went on to elaborate on his many years as an advisor to the House of Representatives. Pages were able to interact with these guests by asking questions and sharing their own views in response to the speaker’s questions.



HOV lane access up for vote

Olympia – Senate Bill 7523 was introduced yesterday by Senators John McDonald and David Kvamme. “This bill addresses the issue of climate change and will do its part to encourage people to own and drive hybrid vehicles, thus moving us ever-closer to our goal of significantly reducing our state’s carbon emissions,” said Sen. Kvamme. The bill will open HOV lanes to all hybrid vehicles

and is a significant step forward in encouraging the public to move away from purely fossil-fuel cars.

Mock committees debate bills, vote

Simulated committee hearings were held on Thursday. Pages read their bills and “committee members,” governed by the rules of parliamentary procedure, debated the pros and cons of the proposals. A “DO PASS” or “DO NOT PASS” recommendation was then voted upon, allowing a bill to continue on in the legislative process. As in the real political system, some bills died in committee.

Senators push to ban salvia

Olympia – Senate Bill 6551 was introduced yesterday by Senators Colin Carter and Andrew Bell. “This bill addresses the issue of Salvia divinorum and will prohibit the sale, transportation and use of the plant in all parts of Washington State,” said Sen. Carter. The herb, also known as Diviner’s Sage, is a hallucinogen that is used mainly by youth to get a high similar to marijuana. “The product is legal in our state now, but we can’t allow its use by our young people. It’s just another drug that can lead to more serious consequences,” said Sen. Bell.



House to promote hunting safety

Olympia – House Bill 3235 was introduced yesterday by Representatives George Baron and Jacob Samson. “This bill addresses the issue of hunting safety and will significantly decrease the risk of injury or death caused by hunting accidents,” said Rep. Samson. The bill will prohibit any minor under the age of 16 from obtaining a hunting license and will redraw hunting zones so they don’t conflict with areas frequented by hikers and campers.

Page School teachers start new session

The Washington State Legislature’s 2009 Page School employs teachers Judi Orr, a certificated teacher, and Matt Kreiling, former Legislative intern and lobbyist. Judi is a retired social studies and English teacher who taught for over 35 years in the Clover Park School District, and Matt lobbied for the Washington Student Lobby representing college students throughout Washington. Both teachers enjoyed meeting so many students from all parts of Washington and teaching them more about how state government functions.



Page program over 100 years old

The Legislative page program has been in existence since 1891. This photo is of pages who served in past years. The first female page served in 1937. In the past, pages were required to do ironing and cleaning for members. Page duties today are much more professional.

Page School on the web

The Page School has its own web site. You can find us at: www1.leg.wa.gov/WorkingwithLeg/PageSchool/. This newsletter has been posted there.



